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NATIONAL REPORT OF GUYANA ON FOLLOW-UP AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MANDATES OF THE DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT OF THE V SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS – PORT-OF-SPAIN

(Guyana 2010)

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I. HEALTH

1. Guyana ensures that health care delivery is based on equity and accountability. The Ministry of Health strives to improve the physical, social and mental health status of all Guyanese and non-Guyanese residing in Guyana by ensuring that health services are as accessible, acceptable, affordable, timely and appropriate as possible given available resources and that the effectiveness of health personnel is enhanced through continuing education, training and management systems.

2. Guyana had prepared a "National Health Sector Strategy 2008-12 (NHSS 2008-12)" that sets out the government's plans for providing equitable access to high quality and 'consumer-friendly' health services. The strategy covers all health care provided in the country by public, private and voluntary services and is guided by the values and principles outlined in the National Development Plan and the Poverty Alleviation Strategy i.e. to protect the most vulnerable and assure sustainability, accountability and transparency in government-led processes.

3. The NHSS 2008-12 focuses on reducing morbidity and mortality by ensuring universal access to effective interventions for the newborn, children, adolescents, and young adults. This priority area is vital to improve national health status, and for Guyana's effort to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 4 and 5. Over the last five years, significant improvements in statistical reporting have been achieved, and more reliable baselines are available with which to compare and measure progress. By 2005, morbidity and mortality rates stabilized, and the Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2006 shows a significant reduction over the MICS 2001.

4. Maternal health will be enhanced with a full **Women's Health Programme**, introducing services for pre-conception, safer motherhood, and early detection of breast and cervical cancer, whilst continuing to integrate other vertically delivered services into the Integrated Management of Common Childhood Illnesses (IMCI). Obstetric care is to be improved with an enhanced package of services standardised at all hospitals, and C-section capacity developed for all Regional Hospitals.

5. Safer motherhood will be strengthened through inter-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration, and through promotion of community support groups in, for example, breastfeeding and HIV counselling. Maternity services will be stratified further to improve quality at the various levels from basic care to comprehensive obstetric services, to simplify provision of the right equipment and supplies, to ensure equity in the distribution of trained skilled staff, to reinforce management of high risk cases, and to develop a functional referral system. Training in emergency obstetric care will be done at all levels of the health care system. Provision of mosquito nets for mothers and children will greatly reduce malaria morbidity.

6. Like other countries, Guyana is experiencing an increase in illness, premature deaths and disability from chronic non communicable diseases: heart disease, hypertension leading to stroke and kidney failure, diabetes and cancers. Containing the increase requires lifestyle changes by individuals, environmental change led by government, plus earlier diagnosis,

treatment and rehabilitation services. Otherwise, premature deaths and disabilities will rise, and costs will spiral.

II. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

7. Guyana had made noteworthy advancement in relation to the development of its indigenous peoples, who represent some 9 per cent of its population. A Ministry of Amerindian Affairs has been established, and the Amerindian Act of 2006 provided for, inter alia, land claims, resource rights, traditional rights, the governance of communities and the establishment of a National Toshaos Council. Access to social services has been significantly improved, and more indigenous children were now in school than in any previous period in the country's history. Over the past five years, the ownership of land by indigenous communities has increased from 6.5 per cent to approximately 14 per cent of Guyana's land mass, with 134 communities now having legal title to the lands that they used and occupied. Those legal titles were grants of State lands that were "absolute and forever" and allowed for their indisputable control by communities. Addressing land claims is a continuous process.

8. The Amerindian Act 2006 provides for detailed rights in relation to the Amerindians, especially land rights. It provides generally for the recognition and protection of the collective rights of Amerindian Villages and Communities, the granting of land to Amerindian Villages and Communities and the promotion of good governance within Amerindian Villages and Communities. This is the primary legislation on the property rights of indigenous peoples over lands, territories and natural resources further complimented with other statutes.

III. EDUCATION

9. The Ministry of Education (MOE) of Guyana in its current Education Plan (2008-2013), has emphasized the provisions of quality education to learners at all levels; indeed the theme of the plan is "Meeting the Quality Imperative". This is very much in line with the commitment of Port-of-Spain.

10. Guyana has a gross enrollment ratio of nearly 80% for its pre-school/nursery programme. The Ministry of Education hopes that this will be improved in the near future as it has proposed in it new education legislation that the two-year pre-school or nursery education programme should be compulsory, and it has set a goal of more than 90 percent of the relevant age cohort being enrolled by the end of this plan period.

    Guyana, like most other countries, with the exception of Haiti, has virtually achieved universal primary education. Although in recent years the net enrollment ratio has dropped from the well over 90% to about 88%, the Ministry feels that this is more due to a margin of error by the Bureau of Statistics in estimating the school age population at almost the end of a census period (nearly ten years) than to an actual fall in the enrolment ratio. Indeed the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) carried out by the Bureau of Statistics with support from UNICEF in 2006 revealed that "96% of primary school age children are enrolled in school regardless of the sex". At the primary level, the Ministry has maintained improved literacy and numeracy as the most important objective. The Ministry has, with assistance from the World Bank, done one Early Grade Reading Assessment and the recently created (2009) Literacy Unit is taking steps to remedy the weakness identified in the Assessment. The Ministry established a Literacy Unit in 2009 with the specific mandate of improving the level of literacy both in and out of school. The Literacy Unit has Literacy Coordinators in all the education departments to monitor the implementation of the Literacy Hour in schools and provide support for teachers as they implement the various activities.

11. Guyana has already achieved an enrollment rate of about 75% at the secondary level. The Ministry has however committed to achieving Universal Secondary Education (USE) in its current Strategic Plan. Currently most persons completing the primary level move on to secondary school because education is compulsory until age 15. It was noted however that the drop-out rate increased significantly after grades 8 and 9 which contributed to the lower enrollment ratio at this level. The Ministry of education has embarked on a number of strategic reforms at the secondary level. These include the Secondary Competency Certificate Programme (SCCP), a technical and vocational programme offering English and Mathematics plus electives such as Agricultural Engineering, Electrical Installation, Garment Construction, Catering, Technical Drawing, Carpentry, Joinery, Decorative Craft etc. Twenty-six schools are currently offering this programme and the Ministry hopes to expand to 70 school by 2013. The Ministry has also introduced a six-year secondary school programme, with a remedial year for students who did not do well at the primary level. A special curriculum has been designed with a major emphasis on Mathematics, English and Reading in the first year. An emphasis on Science and Technology and the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) are also among the Initiatives.

12. Guyana still has some way to go to achieve a tertiary participation rate of 40%, however, enrollment in post secondary technical and vocational education appears to be increasing in the last few years and it will increase even further with the completion of two additional technical institutes in regions that currently do not have such facilities.

13. Finally, the Ministry of Education is giving considerable importance to the development of life skills, including the promotion of healthy lifestyles and decision-making skills, in its Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) programme. The Ministry feels that this programme needs to be strengthened considerably if it is to achieve the desired objectives. To this end, it commissioned a review of the programme by external consultants and will be making some changes, especially in the training of teachers to implement such programmes.

IV. SOCIAL SECURITY

14. Guyana adopts a rights-based approach to social security including comprehensiveness, accessibility, universality, adequacy and appropriateness, and non discrimination. The Government provides social security at different levels including social assistance to the poor and most vulnerable sections of the population. The following are some of the Social Programmes that are currently in place:-

- A public Assistance Programme that targets vulnerable groups (July-December 2009, 9,297 persons were beneficaiaries);

- The Single Parent Assistance Programme (29 percent female headed households) was introduced in 2009. This porgramme offers skills training or retraining, assistance with day care costs and project funds to start micro-economic activity. In its first year, 700 single-headed household (majority female) benefitted from the Programme across the ten administrative regions;

- Under the Old Age Pension Act, all persons 65 years and over are eligible to receive benefits, no mean test is conducted. Approximately 42,000 pensioners benefit;

- The elderly also receive an automatic waiver for their water supply;

- A preferential electricity tariff on households whose monthly electricity consumption is below a specified threshold, thereby benefitting the most vulnerable households;

- Government of Guyana funded Youth skills training programmes offer job and economic opportunities through training and empowerment. The school uniform programme targets the poor nationwide; 26,000 children benefitted annually in Years 2007-2009 including those from hinterland communities.

- The school feeding assistance programme targets children from poor and vulnerable families, including those in the hinterland communities. This programme improves the children's nutritional status and creates employment and income for women's and farmers' groups.

- The Basic Nutrition Programme (BNP) Nutritional Sprinkles Programme, established to reduce malnutrition and anemia in pregnant mothers and infants age six to 24 months, benefits 20,000 women and children.

V. HUMAN RIGHTS

15. In Guyana, human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons are protected through constitutional provisions, statutory and administrative measures. Guyana has enacted a series of statues that specifically promotes and protects human rights. These include the Trafficking in Persons Act of 2005, leglistation to increase the age of consent from 12 to 16 years; the Amerindian Act of 2006; and four pieces of modern legislations dealing with children's rights, including legislation providing for the establishment of the Child Care and Protection Agency, the Sexual Offences Bill and the Persons with Disbalities Bill of 2009. The above mentioned legislations have been enacted following extensive consultation with civil society, communities and special interest groups and have been subjected to additional review through the Parliamentary Select Committee process, a feature of the Guyana's lawmaking process.

16. The Constitution of Guyana promises a wide range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. In accordance with Article 154(A) (1) of the Constitution, every person, as contemplated by the respective international treaties to which Guyana has acceded, is entitled to the human rights enshrined in those international treaties. The treaties are listed in the Fourth Schedule to the Constitution. The Executive, Legislature, Judiciary and all organs and agencies of the Government shall pay due regard to international law, conventions, covenants and charters bearing on human rights. Victims of violations can seek redress in the courts for breaches of human rights under the constitution or any other laws. Chapters III and IV of the Constitution further provide for fundamental rights and freedoms of the individuals. Any citizen of Guyana can apply to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) or its respective body under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

17. Guyana's Constitution and statutes constantly and absolutely recognise its cultural, ethnic and religious diversity and the consequential sensitivities. Therefore embedded in the Constitution and legislations are provisions that address this diversity. The Constitution specifically makes provisions for Amerindian peoples (indigenous peoples made up of 9 distinctive linguistic groups) (Article 149 G). Equality and non- discrimination are basic tenets of the human rights corpus; discrimination is defined "on the grounds of race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed, age, disability, marital status, sex, gender, language, birth, social class, pregnancy, religion, conscience, belief or culture."(Article 149 (2)) Article 149 (D) provides for equality of persons before the law; Article 149 (E) for equality status and 149 (F) for the equality of women.

VI. LABOUR

18. The Constitution of Guyana guarantees the right to work, the right to hold industrial strikes, the right to associate and the right to collective bargain; all these laws adhere to ILO standards as well as other human rights instruments.

19. The Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security is responsible for overseeing Guyana's labour law implementation and facilitates mediation in industrial disputes.

20. Guyana's labour laws include equal pay for equal work. There is the Equal Rights Act No. 19 of 1990 that clearly provides for the concept of 'equal work equal remuneration' by removing gender distinction in the work place. Other labour laws that protect citizens' equal rights are: (i) The Prevention of Discrimination Act (ii) the Termination of Employment and Severance Pay Act (Act No. 10 of 1997) and (iii) the Racial Hostility Act.

21. Guyana has the Trade Union Recognition Act No. 33 of 1997 and its 2009 Amendment, which ensures the constitutionally protective right to join, be part of a trade union and to be recognised.

22. There are two umbrella trade union bodies, the Guyana Trade Union Congress (GTUC) representing 7 trade unions with a total membership of 15,000 and the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG) representing 4 trade unions with a total membership of 35,000.

VII. PUBLIC SECURITY

23. The Government of Guyana will continue to ensure the protection of citizens, organizations, and institutions against threats to their well-being and to the prosperity of their communities. It is through this commitment that a number of administrative and legislative initiatives based on the respect for and promotion of human rights have been undertaken.

24. Guyana has strengthened its cooperation on security matters with countries of the Hemisphere. To date, Guyana has active cooperation with Brazil, Suriname, Venezuela, Cuba, Colombia, all countries within the region and the United States with the aim to prevent and suppress all dimensions of international criminality. Guyana reaffirms its commitment to the Declaration on Security in the Americas.

25. The Government of Guyana condemns Terrorism in all its forms and manifestation and sees it as criminal and unjustifiable in all circumstances. Guyana is a party to the following Universal anti-terrorism instruments:

    - Inter-American Convention against Terrorism (2002)
    - Convention on Offences and Certain other Acts committed on Board Aircrafts (1963)
    - Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation (1971)
    - Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft (1970)
    - Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation (1988)
    - Convention for the Suppression of unlawful acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (1988)
    - Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Fixed Platforms located on the Continental Shelf (1988)
    - Convention on the physical protection of nuclear material (1979)
    - Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected persons including diplomatic agents (1973)
    - International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (1998)
    - International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999)
    - International Convention against the Taking of Hostages (1979)

- Convention on the marking of Plastic Explosives for the purpose of detection (1991)

26. Further, Guyana has employed legislative and administrative measures to prevent, punish and eliminate terrorism and all criminal activities that finance and facilitate it. The Anti- Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Act 2009 and the establishment of the Financial Intelligence Unit are such measures.

27. Guyana is currently drafting Comprehensive Anti-Terrorism legislation to give legal effect to the said Conventions and preparations are being made to ratify the other United Nations Anti-Terrorism instruments to which Guyana has acceded.

    The Government of Guyana is committed to preventing and suppressing organized crime in all its forms. This commitment can be assessed from Guyana's efforts both at the International and National levels. At the International level, Guyana has acceded to a number of International Conventions namely:

    - United Nations Convention against Corruption (31 Oct. 2003)

    - United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (15 Nov. 2000) and its three protocols:

        - Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition (31 May 2001)
        - Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (15 Nov. 2000)
        - Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (15 Nov. 2000)

    - Anti-terrorism Conventions referred to in Paragraph 69 of the Declaration of Commitment of Port-of-Spain of the V Summit of the Americas.

28. At the National level Guyana has a number of legislations to suppress and combat organized crime namely:

    - The Trafficking in Persons Act, 2005

    - The Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Act, 2009

    - The Fire Arms Act

29. The Government of Guyana recognizes the importance of a system of inclusion (participation of governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and other stakeholders) when formulating and fostering public policies. Country wide consultations are

held for the purpose of fostering public policies aimed at strengthening the fight against crime, violence and insecurity in Guyana.

30. In addition, at the level of the Oversight Ministry responsible for Public Security- Ministry of Home Affairs- enquiries and complaints about the activities of the Agencies under the Ministry can be made by letter, privately and directly to the Minister of Home Affairs or via his assistants. In addition, public days are also facilitated by the Ministry to address complaints and enquiries from members of the public. The Office of Professional Responsibility and the Police Complaints Authority are other agencies through which persons can lodge complaints and seek redress for injustices committed by members of the Guyana Police Force.

31. Independently, the Guyana Police Force has established mechanisms to handle individuals' enquires and complaints about the activities of the Police Force through public days facilitated by the Commissioner of Police and the various Divisional Commanders.

32. To further strengthen existing mechanisms, the Government of Guyana is currently embarking on a Citizen Security Project funded by the Inter American Development Bank and the Government of Guyana. The aim of the Citizen's Security Programme is to modernize the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Guyana Police Force. The project will ensure that the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Guyana Police Force provide a better quality of service to the public.

33. There has been close collaboration with law enforcement locally, in the Region, INTERPOL and other International Anti-Crime organizations in the exchange of intelligence for the suppression of crimes.

34. Guyana will continue to work to strengthen its efforts to prevent and combat all aspects of the drug problem and its related crime.

    Guyana is a party to:

    - Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol;
    - Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971
    - United Nations convention against Illicit traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

35. To further strengthen its anti-drug efforts, Guyana has participated in the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) and is implementing its recommendations. Participation in UNODC and CICAD has been beneficial to Guyana's anti-narcotic efforts.

36. Guyana is also actively involved in the Anti-Narcotic efforts of CARICOM. Bilateral anti-narcotic agreements with Brazil, Suriname, Venezuela, Colombia and recently Russia have been

established. Guyana's security forces have been the recipients of several United States and United Kingdom training courses aimed at addressing the drug problem.

37. At the domestic level, Guyana has either completed or is implementing the various stages of the sixty six (66) programmes of the National Drug Strategy Master Plan (NDSMP).

38. The Government of Guyana will continue to work with other agencies to strengthen its efforts to suppress violence in all its forms in Guyana. Through State efforts, Anger Management and Conflict Resolution are courses offered for the rehabilitation of prisoners in the Guyana Prison Service. Country wide consultations have been successfully conducted in relation to violence in schools. Youth groups, sports, culture, skills training have been promoted in our society as preventative measures against violence particularly among at-risk adolescents.

39. In addition, the religious community has been active in promoting non-violence projects. These projects have complemented law enforcement/government anti-violence strategies. Several projects/programmes which integrates spiritual values and positive community values, have been executed with the aim of preventing alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, HIV/AIDS, and domestic violence. These projects help young people cope with and avoid such problems.

40. There are other NGOs with an active violence prevention curriculum that promotes training, volunteering and empowerment and development of our youths.

41. The Government of Guyana is convinced that the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials are a threat to security. Guyana acceded to the Inter American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and other Related Materials on April 07th 2008. Guyana does not manufacture firearms, ammunition explosives or other related materials, however, cognizant of the increase in gun related crime/conflicts; Guyana has taken a number of measures to address this issue. In recent times, Guyana amended its Firearms Act Chapter 16:05 to place stringent penalties on offences under the Act.

42. Guyana's Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AMLCFT) Act 2009 demonstrates Government's efforts to safeguard the financial system from terrorist groups. The Act outlines the employment of national measures and international cooperation to counter the financing of terrorism by the identifying (Part III- Article 28 of the AMLCFT Act 2009), tracking, freezing, and seizing and forfeiting the funds/assets (Part IV & V of the AMLCFT Act 2009) of the proceeds of criminal activity.

43. From 2002-2008 there existed about three Criminal Gangs that operated in our society. Law enforcement consisting of the Guyana Police Force and the Guyana Defence Force have taken strident action against such gangs such that today the negative impact have reduced tremendously to the extent that remnants of those gangs are questionable. The experience gained during that period has provided the skills to prevent and suppress emerging gangs.

44. Several security programmes have resulted in the prevention and suppression of criminal gangs across Guyana: The Citizen Security Programme; Community Policing Groups and the increased intelligence between the police, other law enforcement and the community also serve to prevent the formation of criminal gangs.

45. The Modernization of the Ministry of Home Affairs under the Citizen Security Programme will add an Offenders Management Unit that will address the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders and victims of criminal gangs. Currently, rehabilitation and reintegration services are offered by the State and NGOs.

VIII. ENERGY

46. Guyana has been taking steps to diversify its energy matrix. With over 7000MW of hydropower potential in the country, Guyana has been carefully studying and analysing the various options. A 154 MW hydropower plant is currently in the final stages of financial closure and Guyana is anticipating commencement of construction by the end of 2010. Since Guyana's electric utility is dependent on fossil-based imports for all of its energy generation, a 154 MW plant will meet all of its electricity needs, which represent about 25% of fossil fuel imports.

47. Analysis of energy supply by product reveals that Guyana's present energy supply is comprised of 70% contribution from fossil fuels and 30% from renewable energy. The renewable energy consumption is primarily from bagasse and rice husk. With the addition of a 30 MW bagasse-based generation 2009, bagasse now represents 14.5 % of the installed capacity of Guyana. In addition to hydropower and baggasse, Guyana has been actively installing solar photovoltaic systems in remote hinterland communities that do not have access to grid power. To date, more than 88kW of solar photovoltaic systems have been installed.

48. Guyana embarked on a public awareness campaign to sensitize the public on energy efficiency and conservation programs. Four brochures were designed to cover Transportation, Lighting, Appliances and Building Designs. A total of 12,000 brochures were printed and distributed to various sector agencies, key stakeholders and the general public. In addition, there were two publications of centre-page pull-outs in the newspapers; a press conference; a seven-day radio quiz and a live panel discussion on energy-related matters. A website at **www.gea.gov.gy** was created and updated with current content on energy development in the country. Information on the various energy sources, energy statistics and energy saving were included. A blog environment was created to stimulate dialogue on energy-related matters. A "Programme to Promote the Effective and efficient use of Energy" has been drafted and is currently awaiting approval and financing.

49. Guyana supports the exchange of experiences and best practices in the implementation of energy efforts in the Hemisphere. Guyana has been actively participating in the following energy forums:

    - Workshop to launch the Caribbean Information Platform on Renewable Energy (CIPORE) in Ocho Rios, Jamaica during February 23-27, 2009.

    - VI International Conference for Renewable Energy, Energy Savings & Energy Education held in Havana, Cuba from June 09-12, 2009.

    - Ministerial Meetings for the VI Presidential Summit of Petrocaribe held in St. Kitts on June 11-12, 2009. (June 11 – Meeting of Ministers and June 12 – Heads of State Summit).

    - Renewable Energy Meeting at Hilton Conference Centre, Port-Of-Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, March 10, 2010.

- Energy Efficiency Meeting at the ECLAC Office, Port-Of-Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, May 13-14, 2010.

50. A number of proposals have been submitted for the production of biodiesel and ethanol from a variety of feedstock. The Ministry of Agriculture, with funds from the Special Japanese Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank, will procure consulting services, with the objective of :

    - Developing a methodology for identifying viable investment opportunities, knowledge transfer, and preliminary identification of potential bioenergy programs;

    - Designing a financial vehicle or instrument to develop viable investment opportunities and pilot implement a Strategy to promote Guyana's potential for bioenergy production;

    - Capacity building and transfer of technology; and

    - Institutional strengthening to support the Agro-energy Policy of Guyana and support for small-scale bioenergy demonstration projects and dissemination of results.

51. The Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology (IAST) has piloted a unit capable of producing 60 x 45-gal barrels of biodiesel per month using edible oils and waste edible oils as feedstock. 48 barrels of biodiesel were produced by the IAST laboratory in 2008.

52. Based on the design of the IAST biodiesel pilot unit, a commercial scale unit is currently in operation at Wauna, Region 1. This unit is capable of producing 300 to 600 barrels of biodiesel per month using palm oil as the feedstock. 1,076 barrels of biodiesel was produced in 2008 and were sold to the Region 1 Administration for power generation at Mabaruma.

XIX. PROMOTING EMVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Introduction

53. Guyana is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change for many reasons.

54. Approximately 90% of the country's population resides on the Coastal Plain which lies approximately 0.5 to 1 metre below mean sea level. The coast is also relatively flat, which favours rapid accumulation of rainfall runoff, and which makes natural drainage into the ocean very difficult.

55. Over the years, high levels of flooding were observed in the country especially along the coast and in some inland areas. Climate change is likely to increase the frequency and intensity of flooding events.

56. Approximately 75% of the country's economic activities are located on the coastal area, where the major economic activities, such as agriculture, fisheries and industries are found. These sectors are extremely sensitive to extreme weather events and sea-level rise and are therefore highly vulnerable to changes in climate.

Guyana's efforts to address climate change

57. Guyana established a commitment to work for the reduction of the negative impacts of climate change initially by becoming a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the Rio Earth Summit on the 13th June 1992, then ratifying the Convention on 17th November 1994 and acceding to the Kyoto Protocol on the 5th August, 2003.

58. Several institutions and a National Climate Committee (NCC) were set-up in light of the growing need for actions to be taken nationally to address the potential impacts of Climate Change for Guyana.

59. Guyana's environmental policies have included strategies which support climate change adaptation and mitigation. For example, the introduction of the Environmental Protection Act and the Environmental Protection Agency in 1996 has contributed to significant improvements in the approach to the management of environmental issues in Guyana.

60. As part of its obligations to UNFCCC, the country prepared its Initial National Communication in Response to its Commitments to the UNFCCC (2002). A National Climate Change Action Plan and a National Climate Change Adaptation Policy and Implementation Plan, with focus on the low-lying Coastal Region were also prepared. The Second National Communication is currently being developed.

61. The country has placed the protection and sustainable management of its forest as a major national priority. The country's pristine forests, which cover about 15 million hectares, or 80 percent of the country, are one of its most valuable natural assets. Guyana has had relatively

low historical rates of deforestation of 0.1 percent to 0.3 percent. (UN FAO FRA 2005, Colchester 1999).

62. The forests contain a wealth of biodiversity and provide valuable ecosystem services, both at a local level. By enabling the protection of its forests over many years, Guyana has managed to avoid significant green-house gas emissions into the atmosphere that would have been otherwise produced through deforestation (tropical deforestation is a leading cause of climate change, responsible for about 17% of global greenhouse gas emissions).

63. A major initiative taken by Guyana to address climate change was the launching of its Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) on June 8, 2009.

64. This Strategy sets out a new development path for the country that is based on Guyana deploying its forests to mitigate global climate change and in return receiving payments from the world for the carbon service the forests provide, without compromising the sovereignty over the forests or affecting the development prospects of the people.

65. With the implementation of the Strategy, the country can avoid cumulative forest-based emissions of 1.5 gigatons of CO2e (carbon dioxide equivalent which includes other greenhouse gases) by 2020 that would have been produced by an otherwise economically rational development path. Avoided deforestation will have positive effects on other critical environmental services Guyana's forests provide to the world in addition to carbon storage and sequestration, such as bio-diversity and ecosystem services.

66. The Strategy has several important components. The first examines how Guyana can deploy its forests in mitigating climate change while also gaining financial and other support for doing so. The second examines how the country can move along a low carbon development path. The third examines the further protection of Guyana from the effects of climate change (adaptation). The LCDS aims to enable overall national development in the process.

67. Guyana's LCDS highlights several key areas for action in creating a low carbon economy:

- Investment in low carbon economic infrastructure, including the development of hydropower to reduce reliance on non-renewable energy sources, the upgrading of sea defences to protect against future sea level rise, investment in high technology telecommunications facilities, and improving roads, drainage and irrigation to unused, non-forested land that can be converted to agriculture.

- Investment and employment in high-value, low carbon economic sectors, including the production of fruit and vegetables, aquaculture and sustainable forestry and wood processing.

- Continued capacity building of existing forest-dependent sectors, including forestry and mining, to ensure operating standards are sufficient to sustainably protect Guyana's forests.

- Investment in low carbon business development opportunities such as business process outsourcing and ecotourism.

- Investment in communities and human capital, thereby ensuring that indigenous Amerindian communities and the broader Guyana citizenry have improved access to health, education, renewable energy, clean water and employment, without threatening the sustainability of forest resources.

68. Another major component of the LCDS regards the further protection of Guyanese people and productive land from changing weather patterns. The LCDS proposes urgent, near-term investments in the highest priority areas where the population and economic activity are concentrated. These investments include:

    - Upgrading infrastructure and assets to protect against flooding through urgent, near-term measures.

    - Addressing systematic and behavioral concerns. These initiatives include strengthening building codes, expanding the early warning system and building an emergency response system.

    - Developing financial and risk/insurance measures to boost resiliency post flooding.

    - Switching to flood resistant crops.

    - Addressing the climate change adaptation needs of Guyana's hinterland regions, including forest communities.

69. Even while the details of a global framework to address REDD+ are being worked out, Guyana has moved ahead to develop its LCDS.

70. To support capacity building for REDD+ as part of the wider implementation of the LCDS, Guyana has embarked on a number key initiatives and activities. One key approach has been through many partnerships with other countries, groups and organisations.

71. On November 9, 2009 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Governments of Norway and Guyana was signed regarding cooperation on issues related to the fight against climate change, in particular those concerning REDD+. In the MoU it was agreed that Norway would provide Guyana with performance based payments for avoided deforestation which will amount to contributions of up to US$250 million by 2015.

72. Guyana's REDD thrust is also supported through a World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) project to support capacity building and readiness preparation for tapping into REDD climate funds and carbon market financing ultimately.

73. Guyana joined 34 other countries in the Informal Working Group on Interim Financing for REDD+ (IWG-IFR), convened by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in April 2009. The group made proposals on how to achieve a 25 percent reduction in global deforestation rates by 2015 at a cost of between €15 and €25 billion. The country also works closely with groups such as the Coalition for Rainforest Nations (CFRN) to advocate for REDD+ and to build capacity.

74. Guyana has also made considerable progress internationally in negotiating its position on climate change through the UN and other major processes. The country, along with likeminded countries, has been advocating for broadening the vision of REDD+ in the framework of a post-Kyoto mechanism, to include incentives for those countries with high forest cover and low deforestation rates (HFLD) countries. The country also negotiates on issues such as climate change financing, capacity building and adaptation support.

75. Guyana participated in Conferences leading to the 15th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Copenhagen in December 2009. The Copenhagen Accord which was developed at the end of the Conference highlighted that support for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) was important. There was also some progress in the development of technical aspects on REDD.

76. Recognition and support for avoided deforestation have been possible to a large extent as a result of the country's leadership in the area.

77. Guyana works along with Regional programmes and institutes which help to support capacity building for adaptation to climate change in the region.

78. Locally, an Office of Climate Change and Project Management Office has been set-up to provide institutional support to enable the effective implementation of the LCDS and other related activities.

79. Many sectors (such as mining and forestry) have already begun to integrate policies, legislations and programs in line with the LCDS requirements. For example, a REDD Secretariat has been set-up to build REDD+ capacity in Guyana.

80. Locally, to support the effective development of REDD+ and the wider LCDS, and to enable wide stakeholder involvement in the process, a number of key initiatives have been undertaken.

81. Since the launch of the draft LCDS, the document was subject of a national multi-stakeholder consultation and of extensive outreach sessions. Many educational and awareness sessions with wide stakeholder groups were held to raise awareness on the LCDS and to enable stakeholder involvement in the process.

82. The process and the review of the draft were overseen by a nationally representative steering committee and the process was monitored by a respected international non-governmental organization.

The Way Forward

83. Guyana has played and continues to play an important role in the global effort to combat climate change. Its LCDS and recent agreement with Norway have gained it international recognition, and it is a leading example to other developing countries in demonstrating that the creation of a low deforestation, low carbon, climate-resilient economy is possible, and an example to other forest countries of how the world's forests can be conserved without sacrificing the development aspirations of those who live in them.

84. The LCDS has been revised at this stage actions are being taken to enable the implementation of the strategy.

85. Guyana will also continue to negotiate its positions on climate change at upcoming climate change conferences and continue to build capacity to address climate change.

GEORGETOWN,
GUYANA
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